

REMARKS

Initially, Applicants note that an Information Disclosure Statement (IDS) was filed on January 19, 2005. The Examiner has not acknowledged receipt of this IDS. Applicants continue to respectfully request that the Examiner consider the documents cited in connection with the IDS by initialing and returning a copy of the Form 1449 that accompanies the IDS.

In the non-final Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 1, 2, 4-7, 9, 10, 12, 13, 15, 17-20, 23-25, and 27 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Roy et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,636,515) in view of Skirmont et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,385,209); and rejected claims 3, 8, 14, 21, and 26 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Roy et al. in view of Skirmont et al. and Ben-Zur et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,754,174). The Examiner indicated that claims 11, 16, and 22 would be allowable if rewritten to overcome the rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, and to include the features of the base claim and any intervening claims. Applicants note that there is no outstanding rejection of claims 11, 16, and 22 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph.

By this Amendment, Applicants cancel claims 10, 11, 16, 22, and 27 without prejudice or disclaimer, amend claims 1, 12, 17, and 23 to improve form, and add new claim 29. Claims 1-9, 12-15, 17-21, 23-26, and 29 are pending.

In paragraph 3 of the Office Action, the Examiner rejected pending claims 1, 2, 4-7, 9, 12, 13, 15, 17-20, and 23-25 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Roy et al. in view of Skirmont et al. Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection with regard to the claims presented herein.

Independent claim 1 has been amended to include the allowable feature(s) of claim 11. Therefore, claim 1 is in condition for immediate allowance by the Examiner. Claims 2, 4-7, and 9 depend from claim 1 and are, therefore, also in condition for immediate allowance by the Examiner.

Independent claim 12 has been amended to include the allowable feature(s) of claim 16. Therefore, claim 12 is in condition for immediate allowance by the Examiner. Claims 13 and 15 depend from claim 12 and are, therefore, also in condition for immediate allowance by the Examiner.

Independent claim 17 has been amended to include the allowable feature(s) of claim 22. Therefore, claim 17 is in condition for immediate allowance by the Examiner. Claims 18-20 and 23-25 depend from claim 17 and are, therefore, also in condition for immediate allowance by the Examiner.

For at least these reasons, Applicants submit that claims 1, 2, 4-7, 9, 12, 13, 15, 17-20, and 23-25 are patentable over Roy et al. and Skirmont et al., whether taken alone or in any reasonable combination.

In paragraph 4 of the Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 3, 8, 14, 21, and 26 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Roy et al. in view of Skirmont et al. and Ben-Zur et al. Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection.

Claims 3 and 8 depend from claim 1, claim 14 depends from claim 12, and claims 21 and 26 depend from claim 17. Without acquiescing in the Examiner's rejection with regard to claims 3, 8, 14, 21, and 26, Applicants submit that the disclosure of Ben-Zur et al. does not cure the deficiencies in the disclosures of Roy et al. and Skirmont et al. with regard to claims 1, 12, and

17. Therefore, claims 3, 8, 14, 21, and 26 are patentable over Roy et al., Skirmont et al., and Ben-Zur et al., whether taken alone or in any reasonable combination, for at least the reasons that claims 1, 12, and 17 are patentable.

New independent claim 29 is a method that recites features similar to (but possibly of different scope than) features recited in claim 17. Claim 29 is, therefore, patentable over Roy et al., Skirmont et al., and Ben-Zur et al., whether taken alone or in any reasonable combination, for at least reasons similar to reasons that claim 17 is patentable.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicants respectfully request the Examiner's reconsideration of the application and the timely allowance of pending claims 1-9, 12-15, 17-21, 23-26, and 29.

If the Examiner does not agree that all pending claims are now in condition for allowance, the Examiner is urged to contact the undersigned to discuss the claims in order to expedite prosecution of this application.

As Applicants' remarks with respect to the Examiner's rejections overcome the rejections, Applicants' silence as to certain assertions by the Examiner in the Office Action or certain requirements that may be applicable to such rejections (e.g., whether a reference constitutes prior art, motivation to combine references, etc.) is not a concession by Applicants that such assertions are accurate or such requirements have been met, and Applicants reserve the right to dispute these assertions/requirements in the future.

To the extent necessary, a petition for an extension of time under 35 C.F.R. 1.136 is hereby made. Please charge any shortage in fees due in connection with the filing of this paper, including extension of time fees, to Deposit Account No. 50-1070 and please credit any excess

fees to such deposit account.

Respectfully submitted,

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